



LEADERSHIP

AND THE INDIVIDUAL

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Introduction

In February 2020 a Police Digital Forensics Unit (DFU) was subject to extensive flooding during "storm Dennis" resulting in a critical incident. The response to the incident brought significant leadership challenges that ranged from the primary incident response to the development of a new and sustainable digital forensic capability. As I revisit the incident cognitively, I will utilise the Gibbs reflective model to assist me to reflect on my leadership experience (Gibbs, 1988).

Description

"Storm Dennis" resulted in catastrophic flooding throughout the UK causing wide scale damage to property. The area of Treforest was particularly badly affected as the River Taff burst its banks (BBC NEWS, 2021) resulting in the DFU's first floor being completely submerged in river water. The Unit provided capability for the receipt, triage, and examination of digital devices seized during criminal investigations, behind each exhibit was a victim relying on the Unit to secure evidence in support of their case. The implications of losing this evidence were that predatory criminals would be released back into our communities to reoffend against the most vulnerable. Getting the response right was the only conceivable option.

I was awoken on a rest day by one of my senior management team informing me of a flood at the Unit. I questioned the organisations primary response to be left with little reassurance the matter was adequately gripped. I was informed that the duty Chief Officer was otherwise committed with the impact of the storm within the local communities.

I asked that the reporting officer and the unit manager to meet me at my office to provide me with a situational briefing. On arrival I listened attentively to their words, I

was shown footage obtained from the scene and digested information carefully. My strategic objectives identified six key areas that I needed to move through:

1. Mitigate the risk of loss of digital evidence still requiring examination.
2. Assess and evaluate cases already within the Criminal Justice arena.
3. Implement Business Continuity Plans.
4. Meet all three objectives whilst managing the health and safety of my staff.
5. Move to recovery and rebuild sustainable capabilities.
6. Maintain the trust and confidence of all stakeholders.

I declared a critical incident to engage partners and stood up further resources to assist in mitigating the risk of losing evidence in advance of predicted further flooding as the incoming tide arose. This culminated in additional team members being contacted on their rest days to support strategy implementation.

In the following days the floods retreated affording me to step back from tactical incident command, implement business continuity measures and sustain ongoing business requirements, but the criticality was not over until I fully understood the impact of the floods on evidence, the DFU estate, and our UKAS ISO accreditation as a digital forensics' service provider. In leadership terms there are two distinct phases to consider, the primary response to the flood during which I had tactical command, then subsequent delivery of the remaining strategic objectives, the latter being a fundamentally important, but tedious task that I would oversee strategically. Handing tactical command back to the departmental head (subordinate).

Feelings and Emotions

I recall my personal emotions being affected by the circumstances; it was a much-valued rest day with a family anticipating time with me away from work. I recall

Good, where did you learn this?

Any concerns about this?

How did you feel about this at the time?

what style did you use to do this?

feeling aggrieved that I needed to personally stand-up command, as the Force resilience was challenged by a requirement to deal with the wider impact of the storm on the local community. Furthermore, on being briefed I recall seeing photography of the devastation at the site and cognitively falling back to the potential impact on victims of crime and the damage to the organisation's reputation. There was a strong possibility that if I didn't control my emotions this would cascade into poor leadership of the responding team. *Any motivation?*

motivation The team had congregated for the briefing, also affected by a cancelled rest day. I recall the expression of devastation within them as after all this was their workplace, somewhere they spent more than forty hours a week. The premises contained personal belongings and items of value to them. I recall consciously needing to be sensitive and emotionally aware of this in my leadership style. This was difficult as I didn't personally know the majority of them, I had not worked with them previously or was too distant in professional terms to be able to read their emotional indicators and cues, an important element of any emotionally aware leader when successfully managing a situation (Swati & Shyamalendu, 2019). They would have known me as their Chief Superintendent and been able to assess my leadership over time from a distance.

Of most importance to me was the necessity to look at this from the victim's perspective. I could not possibly consider how they would feel if their offenders were to walk away from the investigation without charge because of the loss of evidence during the flood. This would be catastrophic on their emotional wellbeing and mental health over time. I was also cognisant of how the community would react if we were to let victims down, there would likely be an outward display of anger causing a loss of confidence in the organisation. *How did you feel about that possibility?*

Evaluation

The journey through each strategic objective was complex and detailed; it involved several detectives turning out on their rest days and wading through knee high water within the premises to recover what evidential material they could and remove it to the first floor in advance of the flooding tide. This also had to be achieved under meticulous scrutiny, recording the movement of each exhibit was key to evidential continuity. It required strategic collaboration with partners to forensically dry exhibits in special conditions to save evidential data, and a painstaking review of every case affected by the flood. Working to establish if any evidence had been lost or whether there was secondary evidence that could be used for criminal justice purposes.

On conclusion we had been able to recover evidence in every case, maintaining the trust and confidence of our communities. Business contingency plans remained in being for over a year whilst I identified and moved the team into new premises. The primary response was exceptional as it often is in policing terms, and goals were achieved in dynamic fashion. However, as the days and weeks followed and normality ensued, the challenges became greater in terms of workforce motivation and the team's commitment to reach the desired goals. Through this period there was a shift in command as I pulled away from the primary response back to my strategic role, leaving the department head to oversee the tactical delivery of the remaining objectives. This resulted in two personalities with contrasting leadership styles trying to meet the same objectives. Here onwards, I consider the impact this had on the leader follower relationship, how leadership styles can have a positive or detrimental effect on follower behaviour, and how the emotions of individuals within the team can play a significant part in achieving success. *why what happened?*

Analysis

Throughout my professional career I have explored my leadership style on many occasions, trying to understand how I operate and how others perceive me. Utilising the Myers Briggs personality type methodology, I am established to be introverted, intuitive, thinking, and judging (INTJ) (The Myers Briggs Foundation, 2022). *why?*

My style identifies that I have strong values and beliefs and determine leadership consistency to be of paramount importance to me. I seek to build trusted relationships and instil integrity. I am empowering and conscientious, all of which display the traits of an authentic leadership style (Baptiste, 2018), however I am handicapped by introversion, and often find myself forced to engage in social situations. *How does this make you feel?*

I also err on the side of dedication to the organisation which often pulls me away from an authentic leadership style, even if just slightly. I often consciously negotiate between my personal values and beliefs and an organisational or political influence. *How*
As a result, I have developed a more transformational leadership style which is built on trust and respect, which often results in the follower providing more energy to the task and generates a feeling of job satisfaction within the team (Podsakoff, et al., 1990).

Podsakoff et al (1990) wrote of the multi-dimensional facets of transformational leadership and the six key behaviours of being able to articulate vision, building a model based on values, promoting common group goals, having high performance expectations, individualised in terms of supporting others and offering intellectual stimulation by challenging normality. These facets of transformational leadership style are the consistent factors I seek to deliver upon. This develops a two-way *why?*

relationship which requires effort of both leader and follower in building the relationship, it also instils a feeling of self-worth within the follower, building the necessary respect of the senior leader (Wallis, et al., 2011). Despite this, some may argue that my style is not as I determine, as both authentic and transformational leadership styles identify charisma as being a respective trait within them, and I am conscious that my introversion does not tend to lean to charismatic leadership (Meuser, et al., 2016).

Whilst transformational leadership will be effective in most industry as a consistent leadership style, policing and the military are unique in terms of the necessity to move through a continuum of leadership styles due to the dynamic command situations they face (Kawalek, 2021). The necessity for speed and robust action can be achieved in a variety of leadership forms. This can sometimes be referred to as situational leadership, where the leader takes cognisance of the task, the circumstances, and the environment and is flexible in their approach (Walls, 2019). *Feelings about this,*

Situational leadership theory identifies that there is no one single leadership model that is effective in every situation, and delivery should be focussed on the task, with an understanding of the required leadership approach and the receiving groups willingness to perform (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).

In this incident I needed to step into the tactical command structure and firmly take control due to a collapsing timeframe of an imminent high tide and apparent further flooding. The longer the exhibits were under water the more likely they would become permanently damaged. Despite not personally knowing the officers who had turned out, they would have expected to see the traditional consistent transformational approach from me, however I needed to flip into a transactional

style to achieve immediate traction, achieve progression, and do so taking firm command (Bass, 1990). ✓

On reflection, I probably displayed an element of several leadership styles. On being briefed I listened carefully, consulted on views and perspectives. This democratic approach often enhances the performance of the workforce, yet I knew that at the point of digesting what they had to say, I would be switching to a more autocratic style due to the urgency required, a style that some determine to decrease performance under any normal circumstance (Caillier, 2020).

where did you learn these styles?

From the follower's perspective, such a transition in leadership styles could have also portrayed me to be unethical in my leadership approach, which can have a detrimental effect on performance (Weinburg, 2014). That said, research also identifies that my traditional transformational leadership style is not always seen as ethical in any event, as outlined by Bass et al (1999).

There is no exception to being both transformational and transactional, most leaders can apply the full range of both leadership styles, albeit the better leaders do more of the transformational than the transactional (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). In these circumstances the transformational approach would not have been effective during the primary response but was of fundamental importance in the longer-term change management challenges. why?

The transition through the continuum of leadership styles was also likely to be supported by legitimate leadership power, where my rank and position in command resulted in the followers' acquiescence, albeit requiring their acceptance of my role. On reflection this displayed that my traditional transformational style had paid dividends in terms of their willingness to follow me over time, regardless of whether

they were to be rewarded or have something taken away such as that in more coercive power relationships (Blaine, 1988).

This becomes relevant as a hypothesis for the team's motivation deteriorating following the primary incident response. As I returned to my day job and transferred tactical command to my head of department, I witnessed the dynamics change within the team with a loss of focus and energy. With hindsight, the department heads leadership style is authoritarian and autocratic (Bass, 1990), with little regard for emotional intelligence and this could have been a factor. why do you think they were this way?

It is not that there is not a space for autocratic leadership in society. Many of today's governmental institutions are based on autocratic leadership (Caillier, 2020), a style with traits of centralising power, authority, and decision making. However, Studies examining autocratic leaders identify that this style of leadership has a detrimental effect on work-force motivation (De Cremer, 2006) which can be identified through them seeing the follower as a contributory factor to goal achievement, as opposed to a human individual with personal needs. Followers will often see an autocratic leader as someone with self interest over that of the team they are leading. was this the case?

An autocratic leadership style lends itself to coercive power and could have reflected in the team's inner resignation. When coercive power is high then it is far more likely that followers will display inner resignation, and to the contrary, legitimate power results in higher performance and lower inner resignation (Hartner-Tiefenthaler, 2020).

Emotional intelligence is of fundamental importance, it requires there to be an understanding between leader and follower. The leader must be self-aware of their own emotions and control them, managing impulses effectively. They must also be

aware of how the follower is feeling, recognising emotions, and interacting with them. Failure to achieve this will affect decision making in situations where anxiety or stress may be prominent (Lubbadeh, 2020). Emotional intelligence is a tool that affords the leader to understand how emotions are impacted by a situation, which if channelled correctly can often lead to successful resolutions (Goleman, 1995). It is an important skill in ensuring a leader can influence a team to meet their goal and is critical in how followers respond, their emotional wellbeing, and performance (Goleman, et al., 2002).

Through my command of the primary response, even if moving through a continuum of leadership styles, my historic and traditional transformational approach had resulted in my ability to maintain the teams support under extreme pressure. My willingness to remain tuned into their emotional perspectives and personal circumstances was clearly welcome. To the contrary, the autocratic style of the departmental head had over time clearly impacted negatively on the team, their failure to be emotionally aware was impacting on the leader – follower relationship. I saw in the team that the inconsistency and lack of self-awareness was having a detrimental impact on their trust in them as a leader.

Research identifies that transformational leader's often have a higher level of emotional intelligence, they are more connected than those who are transactional or autocratic (Gardner & Stough, 2002). Whilst not reflective of this incident, the importance of high emotional intelligence in those who engage the customer at the "coal face" of an organisation should not be overlooked (Swati & Shyamalendu, 2019). In policing terms, its impact on public trust, confidence, and legitimacy can be significant.

Contrary to the autocratic approach undertaken by the department head, the transformational leader is more likely to develop the trust of the workforce. This raises the importance of leaders having the very highest ethical standards to be effective. Trust requires the follower to place confidence in the leader and take a risk that they will come through for them (Caldwell, 2018). On reflection, had the department head been more authentic and transformational, they would likely have had more emotional intelligence, this would have achieved more (Bligh, 2016).

Some argue that trust is a fundamentally important factor in leader – follower behaviour, outlining that effective leadership has a profound impact on trust, which in turn has an impact on productivity leading to organisational success (Koochang, et al., 2017).

Trust is a critical factor in any relationship and its alignment to transformational approaches is more evident than in transactional or autocratic leadership styles. Transformational leaders are empowering of others and therefore trusting to afford them to find solutions and deliver work unsupervised (Mayer, et al., 1995).

Others argue that transactional and autocratic leaders are unlikely to develop such trust from followers, particularly during organisational change projects which is particularly relevant in this incident, as if the leaders actions or style are determined to be unethical or untrustworthy it is not just the one incident that will define them in the eyes of the follower, they are unlikely to be trusted moving forward (Laida & Rune, 2016).

Trust can also be a defining factor in establishing respect, thus a further factor in leader – follower relationships, one that often determines whether the leader is effective or not (Sarros, et al., 2002). Transformational leaders develop a culture of

respect in the workplace by taking care of their staff and looking after their interests, again a trait that is likely to be reciprocated by the follower towards peers and customers alike, enhancing the culture within the organisation at all levels (Haid, 2013).

Whilst transformational leadership may lean more towards developing the culture of respect in the workplace, others argue that the leadership style is not of importance provided that the leader has identifiable successful traits, which demand respect from followers, this can also simply be achieved through ability or the leaders' individual achievements (Clarke, 2011).

Regardless of the leadership style, respect is determined to be a critical influence that can be wrongly seen as unimportant as a leadership trait (Dunning, et al., 2016). To the contrary more recent research identifies a lack of empirical evidence to firmly establish that leadership respect plays any long term added value to the team or wider organisation, outlining that its benefits can be overstated (Rudolph, et al., 2021).

Having considered the leaders perspective, I turn my attention to the reasons why the team's commitment wavered over time, looking more deeply at motivation theory. My personal energy was based on public service motivation, an absolute commitment to dedicate myself to the cause in the interests of public service (Breugh, et al., 2018). I would not accept that one victim would be let down, or one offender be left to reoffend. I was also motivated by the need to prevent reputational harm, both individual and organisational.

I saw in the officers who deployed to the primary incident that they too were motivated by public service and the need to do the right thing. However, on

How did you feel about their motivation?

reflection, rest day remuneration was also a motivating factor for them, a financial reward which over the course of the weekend would be significant. This factor could be a key reason why motivation dropped after the primary incident phase, something I would not have experienced at the outset, but the department head would have been faced with as the normal working week commenced.

Financial remuneration is unlikely to be the only impact factor on loss of motivation. Research identifies that one's motivational needs are rarely satisfied entirely by one dimension alone. Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" identified five factors which escalate from one's primary needs such as food or drink, through to those of self-actualisation (Adair, 2006).

Contrary to Maslow's approach, McClelland (1985) identified that motivational factors are learned through experience and therefore range from individual to individual. As one progresses through life, they learn from positive and negative experiences which influence their motivation, the positive experiences encourage motivation and the negative not so (McClelland, 1985).

Both Maslow's and McClelland's theories of motivation are not unique and the study of Alderfer's (1989) model of existence, relativeness, and growth provides an alternative consideration which focusses on the internal motivational factors of an individual (Alderfer, 1989). Albeit, studies conducted by the military tend to argue these are not appropriate in policing terms as the key motivational factors of respect for the organisation and supervisors are missing (Wilcove, 1978), both of which are of fundamental importance in a disciplined service, even if to the rank alone and not the individual.

Great theories, but how do they explain the lack of financial motivation?

It is important that leaders understand and recognise the importance of motivation on productivity and mental wellbeing, identifying the right time for intervention and knowing how to motivate individuals. Motivational Systems Theory identifies three areas of concern in the field of human motivation, the selective direction of behaviour patterns (Goal setting), the selective energisation of behaviour patterns (how people are turned off and on), and the selective regulation of behavioural patterns (why people give up or keep going) (Ford, 1992). *why?*

This is education that is distinctly lacking in police leadership training given that leaders are already at a disadvantage, as only fifty percent of human motivation is influenced externally, the remaining fifty percent lays within the individual themselves (Adair, 2006). *why?*

During the secondary phase I recall observing how the team I had witnessed during the acute incident response had become isolated, some operating as individuals and with little cohesive direction, lost in the size of the task. With hindsight a team lacking in motivation may not be a team at all, but merely a group of individuals. *why?*

In any critical incident the necessity to build a team environment is of critical importance. To this end it is important that leaders identify how teams are developed and come together, the inter dependencies and conflicts that may arise and how best to manipulate these human traits (Killam, et al., 2020). These were areas not considered by anyone throughout the critical incident response. *why?*

Several academics have considered team building theory over time. Bion (1961) established the cyclic model of team theory, identifying that work group mode and basic assumptions are the key factors in team building. When the team are in the work group mode tasks are completed effectively, however when in the basic

assumption mode conflict becomes apparent as emotions play out. With hindsight, I recognise these traits within the team's response to the secondary incident phase. Bion argued that the process was not phase based, but merely consistently cyclic within the group environment (Bion, 1961). This challenges my understanding further as the responding group worked together daily and were not newly formed, this may present an opportunity to look further into the impact of the autocratic leadership of the department head and its longer term impact on the team.

Contrary to Bion, others argue that teams are developed through a phased approach. Tuckman (1965) identified the now infamous sequential approach to team building theory. This consisted of the "forming" phase where the group establishes roles and rules that are acceptable, the "storming" phase where individual traits come out and result in differences of opinion. The "norming" phase where the team starts to build as they begin to understand one another's perspectives, the "performing" stage where hierarchy is diminished, and trust is established. Then finally the "adjourning" phase where they evaluate their work and come up with new and more innovative ideas or approaches (Tuckman, 1965).

Gersick (1988) identified the team phased theory establishing distinct phases. The "deep structure phase" where the rules of the group are established and a normality ensues, the "equilibrium phase" where the rules established in the first phase are employed, with failure to accept that they don't work or are not suitable. Finally, the "revolutionary phase" whereby the group finally accept that the rules encountered at the deep structure phase are not meeting what is required to meet the objective of the task. This phase usually manifesting itself around the halfway point in respect of timeliness, new ideas are formed, or a new approach established (Gersick, 1988).

great theories, but where was your team?

My command was through the early acute phase of the critical incident where public value motivation and adrenaline was high, with rest day remuneration meeting the motivational needs of the team. The department head did not have the benefit of influencing these needs in terms of motivation and would not have received sufficient training to even consider them at that time. *who did?*

I had command during a phase which was transactional in terms of meeting the early strategic objectives within tight timescales, generating the necessary team ethos to achieve successful outcomes. The same team were utilised *though* the secondary phase where the strategic objectives were tedious and created an environment which was individualistic by its very nature. This would have adversely affected the department head's ability to create the right staff environment to achieve individual task completion and for them to do their very best for the organisation (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). *were rewards considered?*

Leadership is not one dimensional and consideration needs to be taken to the follower's experience and perspective (Meuser, et al., 2016). As I reflect on this, and my own leadership within the secondary phase of the critical incident, I could have better supported the department head in terms of recognising the importance of motivation and in particular the steps identified in Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" theory, as identified by Adair (2006). The difficulties the department head was having in motivating the team could have been supported by me, had I chosen to provide praise and reward, as according to McClelland, this would provide a level of job satisfaction and encourage the recipients to achieve again (Milner, 2005).

A further self-reflection was my failure to recognise resilience as a key component in the team, and despite earlier claims of being emotionally aware, I had failed to

why?
consider its importance. Resilience is a key component in any team when trying to maintain performance, especially in adverse events such as this one (Hartwig, et al., 2020).

Finally, it is important to recognise that the strategic objectives outlined at the commencement of the critical incident were successfully achieved and much credit goes to the department head and the team for their response. The complexities of the leader – follower relationship is such, that if truly understood the period between incident to conclusion could have been significantly reduced, along with increased workforce morale and better wellbeing throughout.

Action Plan

1. The importance of transformational leadership in UK policing should not be underestimated, its benefits are wider and more far reaching than those experienced in one specific incident. It should form the basis for all police leadership training, particularly in long term organisational change methodology. ✓
2. Moving forward, I personally need to be more cognisant that leadership has several perspectives, how I lead in terms of trait and style, but as important how individuals become teams, what motivates them in terms of needs, and how they learn these traits. This reflection is wider than one individual and identifies the need for leadership training within UK policing to consider such an approach. ✓
3. In future, my approach to resilience will encapsulate the needs of others as well as my own. It's importance in the leader – follower relationship should not

How do you feel ~~about~~ about this action plan?

I question whether in a group who have worked together historically and have presented previously as an effective team, revisiting the Bion, Tuckman or Gersick approach would have benefitted us. Further research should be conducted in this area. *why?*

It is also important to consider how individuals pick up the values and traits that inform their behaviours in such situations, as this also assists in developing our leadership considerations. Learning theory is a complex and much researched area with many conflicting theories. Be it behaviourism such as Pavlov's classical conditioning theory (Bruner, 2004), Cognitivism which replaced behaviourism in the 1960's and focussed on the role of cognitive activities in the learning process (Clark, 2018), or Bandura's (1977) social learning theory which identifies how cognitive and environmental interaction influences human learning encoding behaviour through the observation of others (McCloud, 2016). None of which were evident in any leaders approach to this incident. *why do you think*

Conclusion

sub Prior to this reflection my perception was that the team's focus and commitment to the critical incident wavered based on a change in leader, and leadership approach alone. However, following analysis we have established that whilst leadership styles are of fundamental importance in leader – follower behaviour, there are other important factors often overlooked. Prior to this reflection my focus was on my own trait's, behaviour, and actions, with little regard for the importance of understanding the follower's perspective. *why was that?*

This incident saw two phases led by two very different leaders each with a unique style, mine transformational and the department head who was autocratic. The fact I

was seen to be traditionally transformational played out in my ability to move from this leadership approach to another with ease, due to the urgency of the situation.

On reflection my traditional style had already developed a relationship over time within the team, resulting in their willingness to acquiesce to a situational yet transactional leadership approach, when at its most important. *How do you feel about the team?*

Transformational leadership over time had ensured an engaged workforce who had witnessed an emotionally intelligent leader who cared for his workforce, empowered them, and had gained their trust. As a result, I have determined that a transformational leader can move to a transactional style for short periods of time with limited adverse follower impact, providing the consistency returns soon afterwards. *why?*

To the contrary, the department head worked with the team daily, displaying an autocratic leadership style that focussed on central governance and decision making, a style that emanated little emotional intelligence, and lacked trust. They had taken tactical lead after the acute phase with a view to overseeing the long game, the more tedious tasks in some senses and the workforce commitment stalled as a result.

However, the analysis identifies many other factors not previously considered, whilst inter dependant with leadership styles, they are in themselves additional factors that require discussion. The first is legitimate power, something that provided the team with additional focus as they were not used to the Chief Superintendent taking tactical command, this focussed minds. The department head through their autocratic leadership style was coercive power driven, a detrimental trait when trying to develop and focus a team over time.

be underestimated, in particular during the prolonged periods of some incidents.

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